

ETHNOGRAPHY OF TZELTAL COMMUNITIES

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The boy is expected

to live for a year with the girl's parents; then he makes his own home, usually near that of his father. If the boy's parents are sufficiently powerful, they may pay the girl's parents twelve pesos in lieu of the year's service. Villa was informed that a woman unable to pay a debt or a fine may be taken as a secondary wife by any married man who will pay the debt or fine; that a woman who loses her virginity may be bought similarly of her parents for a little rum; and that in the case of any of these polygynous marriages, a single household is maintained. No such household was observed.

No information was obtained on birth customs," or on customs in connection with death."

Blom and LaFarge describe a church festival held at Tecojá ranch on June 22 and 23.¹⁰ When Villa visited the highland villages the carnival was being celebrated. In Tenejapa on February 20 he witnessed the "Festival of the Flags" (*tahimalkin*). The (annually elected) leaders of the festival, the *alfereces*, assembled in the morning at the church. Each man conveyed a red banner with green edges, fastened to a pole, and each held in his mouth a short hook on which an orange was impaled. Nothing was learned as to the significance of these objects. The *alfereces* remained for a time inside the church drinking rum and singing. They then went by fours to pray in turn before each of the crosses set up in the village. The rest of the day they spent visiting the house of each one of them in turn; in each house they sang the same song sung in the church; in each the host offered rum, so that by nightfall all were drunk. These acts were to be twice repeated during the days following. They had for their stated purpose the announcement of the days of carnival. On the following Thursday the carnival became generally celebrated, and many natives went out costumed and masked.

The *alfereces* were accompanied by musicians, and also by three personages carrying the dried bodies of, respectively, a wild cat, a rodent called *saben*, and an iguana. Villa was informed that these animals are used in a later festal pantomime in which the *alfereces* enact a sowing, and in which these animals are represented as performing their characteristic mischief.

Villa observed other elements of the carnival ritual in Oxchuc. On Thursday, February 24, Indians of the calpul of Santo Tomás assembled in the church where they prayed for a time before the large altar, and then danced and drank rum in the nave. The dance was performed alternately by men and by women, and was accompanied by music from a harp, a guitar, and a rattle made of a calabash and a deer's hoof. On the following day these acts were performed by Indians of the other calpul; on this occasion the music was furnished by two drums and a flute, and the leader (*capitán*) was dressed in red. On this latter day natives of the calpul of Santo Tomás moved in procession through the streets; four individuals bore each a large pole to which were fastened ribbons of various colors; a fifth carried a red banner.

¹⁰ Blom and LaFarge, 1927, 2:199.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 2:300-362.

¹² *Ibid.* 2:362-365.

¹³ The frequent association, in Middle America, of small animals, especially furred animals, with festivals, in connection with ideas of fertility and of festal buffoonery, has been noted. See Redfield, 1930, pp. 231-245.

[P. 468-B]

The authority of the president, however, depends on the use of legal sanctions of prison sentences and fines imposed by extracommunity enforcement agencies in the departmental capital. The weakness of these sanctions—the fine for homicide is 1,000 to 3,000 pesos or three to five years' imprisonment—means that these threats do not have a controlling effect on people's decisions to act. Homicide, carried out by individuals who feel themselves to be threatened, is a supplementary mechanism for social control. Cast in the idiom of witch-killing, homicide is the quasi-official execution of a community threat.

The breakdown in the former structural controls has not been compensated for by the intervention of extracommunity institutions. Attempts to circumvent killing are made by the priest, who counsels against it, warning that the killer will acquire the sins of the man he kills, and by the talking saint of Ixtapa, whom the Indians consult when they are pressed and who advises them to wait—their enemy will be killed for them. This advice is not sufficient to forestall all killings. Motivated by fear, some men still seek to eliminate the object of their fear.⁷ The sense of the guardianship of the ancestors and their intermediaries, the curers, is lost along with the intervention of the civil authorities. The individual reacts, using his own means and trying to get sufficient consensus to avoid reprisal.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Homicide in the community of Teklum can be a statement of the fear of witchcraft, of revenge, or of quasi-official reprisal depending on the circumstances and social relationships involved. Even in this small, self-contained community, homicide does not have a single meaning, analyzable within a single framework of change.

Homicide is part of the expectation pattern of the town. The patterning of the acts of homicide in terms of time, place, and agent makes possible rules of avoidance both in long- and in short-term calculations for survival. The long-range rules require respect behavior to elders, equals, and juniors and the avoidance of abusive or boastful statements. The short-range rules are to avoid walking alone in the woods or milpas far from town, to stay home at night, and to stop drinking.

Despite the grim and expectable outcome of being killed, not all men heed these rules. The love of power and the projection of self into

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coming from the smaller towns to buy. The Indians still bring pottery to sell retail in towns that they visit during a fiesta. One of these is the barrio of Lok'ibal in the municipio of Villa Carranza, where people go on the third Friday of Lent to get holy water from the spring.

The Indians have not taken advantage of the truck to buy pottery wholesale and market it directly in the smaller towns, selling from the truck in the plaza as some of the wholesale fruit truckers do. Another operation which they have failed to profit from is buying the wheat harvest and selling to government warehouses, as some of the Ladino truckers do.

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Lack of capital is the major reason for failure to exploit these opportunities. In marketing the contraband liquor, which is the most flourishing of the new enterprises, the Indians have not yet entered into the external markets except in the case of one young unmarried mother. Wholesale purchases are made by Ladinos, primarily women, from other towns who resell the liquor in Comitán and on the coast. There is however, a well-

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developed home market since all contracts are sealed with the offering of liquor, the "gift of the gods," all court fines are paid in liquor, and the main gift in betrothal is liquor. The cantinas with phonograph players opened by the cooperatives operate very successfully on Saturday night and during fiestas. The internal market for liquor is controlled by a syndicate of the forty-two independent liquor distillers. The price is set at 4 pesos per liter for all buyers, with the buyer providing the bottle.

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Agricultural production is not geared to a market, and Indians do not take advantage of fluctuations in price. Wheat yields a lower return per unit of land than corn, but it is grown for two reasons; the Indians believe that crop rotation of corn and wheat prevents depletion of the soil, and wheat requires less work since no cultivation is needed. Wheat is a cash crop and none of it is milled or consumed directly in town. Poor families sell their wheat "standing" to Teopisca truckers. The price given the

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grower is usually about 90 pesos per hundred kilograms, and it is resold at 110 or 120 pesos in Tuxtla or to the government storehouses. Wheat is sometimes brought directly to San Cristóbal millers who give 120 per hundred kilograms. Corn is primarily a subsistence crop when grown in the center. Corn grown in hot country ejido land is now sold in Teopisca and

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San Cristóbal. The local truck cooperative has a special permit which gives

Roles, Persons, and Performance

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old and do not have as much opportunity to project their personalities in larger than life terms. Ladinas of the neighboring towns are given nicknames: Me[?] Sobol for example, was named for her habit of saying when she was drunk, "No soy bola" (I am not drunk); Me[?] Čičel, meaning Mother Blood, was applied to a woman who sold blood of slaughtered animals. 157
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Behavior is not believed to be totally dependent on innate traits, and the Indians emphasize the socialization processes. A badly behaved youth was said in court to "behave as though he did not have a mother," and to lack fear of his parents. The sense of shame and fear begin at home, and the community relies on the family to instill these controlling influences on behavior. 861
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NOTIONS OF JUSTICE AND COMPENSATION

Notions of immanent justice, whether acquired from the priest or indigenous beliefs, are peripheral to the morality system. Crimes should be paid for not in suffering, guilt, or remorse, but in fines exacted by the communal authority. Every crime has its price, and most people agree that it is good to be able to pay in money and be exonerated. The scale of values assigned in the fines for crimes is some index to the relative weight given them: 577
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Stealing a bull: 500 to 1,200 pesos, depending on value of bull.

Stealing a turkey: 40 to 70 pesos, depending on value of turkey.

Stealing a horse: 300 to 500 pesos, depending on value of horse. 885

The range of fines for each act of theft indicates that justice is exacted on the basis of market value of the item stolen. The fine for murder is 1,600 to 3,000 pesos or two to eight years in prison when a killer is captured by the federal authorities. Local authorities rarely try to find the killer. In the thirty-seven cases of homicide analyzed in the period from 1938 to 1965 (Table 29), only two resulted in federal action. 682

People express doubt about the priest's warning that those who do evil will reap the wages of sin in this life or the next regardless of whether they are found guilty. The pragmatic basis for this conclusion is revealed 577
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554 these role-bearers have other functions to perform, but the term specifies the most significant of these. Other people may unofficially perform these acts but only the officially appointed person has the other prerequisites for and duties of the role.

3. Recruitment into roles depends on age and sex qualifications. Validation of the role emphasizes, in addition to these ascribed characteristics, innate capacity rather than acquired ability. For example, the curers who are respected are assumed to have been born with an animal spirit, while those who are believed to have acquired it are suspected of being witches. Similarly, high civil officials are expected to be innately clever, not just trained for office.

828 4. Evaluation of performance emphasizes the state of the heart and qualifies judgments of the person according to characteristics of the mind and of the soul. The heart governs emotions such as contentment or inner turmoil and determines the moral relations a person has with others. The mind enables a man to deal effectively in his instrumental activities so that he can speak and work well. Possession of a second soul means that one is clever and capable, but it is the third soul which gives power over the life and death of others. The exchange of evaluations about others is a crucial area of concern in the tense atmosphere dominated by fear of witchcraft. In the belief that their very survival depends upon knowledge of the intent of others before it is expressed in witchcraft, the people constantly consult with relatives, compadres, neighbors, or the curers, in order to anticipate changes in their relations with others.

681 5. Sanctions against behavior that fails to meet role expectations depend on the seriousness of the crime rather than on the attitude of the criminal. This means that compensation relieves the wrong-doer of any guilt burden. Most compensation, even for homicide, can be translated into cash payment.

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554 6. Ceremonial behavior in everyday interaction as well as in ritual serves to limit the personal involvement in the encounter and to emphasize the role category. This is particularly emphasized in the initial stage of the encounter. Liquor and cigarettes introduce a more informal behavior in which the etiquette of reserve can be relaxed.

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177 and adaptive responses. With the expansion of cattle raising, Indians have
178 organized associations adjusted to the traditional dual division. The asso-
621 ciation for each side of the dual division mobilizes labor for maintaining
476 the watering holes. The failure to organize communal corrals means that
312 inefficient herding techniques, damage to the milpa, and frequent loss or
(685) theft of cattle persist. The association reacts to the last problem by hiring
killers to get rid of those suspected of theft, but this adaptive response is
limited to dealing with particular incidents and has not solved the prob-
lem.

548 The manufacturers of contraband liquor have succeeded in organizing a
293 syndicate strong enough to maintain a monopoly price for both the inter-
177 nal and external markets and to provide security for themselves against
178 federal agents. The syndicate mobilizes for specific actions, such as raising
435 the bail bond for imprisoned members or punishing informers. As a com-
694 munity-wide organization ignoring the dual division and age-ranked sen-
681 iority, it represents an adaptation in response to extra-community pres-
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474 The cooperatives that have been organized to manage the local store
177 and the trucks provide permanent managerial operations that are an adap-
178 tation to growing interaction in extra-community economic activities.
Cooperative owners are able to raise the capital to maintain and expand
these operations. It is within these structures that entrepreneurial skills are
being developed. The organizers gain the advantage not only of socializ-
ing the risk of loss but also of making a profit in a community where be-
lief in witchcraft, fostered by envy, is rampant.

474 Activities in the new economic enterprises are not supported by any su-
472 pernatural belief. In order to gain acceptance for the new enterprises, the
177 entrepreneur Santos, who had organized the trucking cooperative, recog-
178 nized the need for an ideology. His rhetoric drew upon the sense of depri-
vation Indians feel in their relations with Ladinos. He justified his own
ends as an attempt to gain for all the community the profits that only La-
dinos had been able to gain through trucking and crops resales in the re-
gional markets. The ideology he had begun to formulate stressed eco-
nomic and political independence from both the Ladino entrepreneurs of
neighboring towns and government agents who tried to promote welfare

programs in the interest of "civilizing" the Indians. This formulation involved a basic contradiction between the goal of moving into regional and national networks and that of keeping the old autonomy and independence of the corporate community. He never had to face that contradiction. Unable to gain adherents other than the small group of profit-sharers in the cooperative he organized, he was killed by opponents within the community.

THE FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD

The core of the traditional culture lay in the local power hierarchies patterned on the familial model of age-ordered paternal authority institutionalized in the me²iltatil. The me²iltatil of the household have provided a flexible institution for adjusting conflict within the kin group. Their role in directing ritual performances preserves a sense of continuity in life cycle changes.

The institutionalized authority of the elders has not been upset by the trend toward residence based on nuclear families, which is an adjustment to the pressure of limited space in the town center. Kinship ties are continually reinforced by rituals that draw together the me²iltatil as sponsors of ceremonies marking baptism, marriage, and death. This group of sponsoring relatives has absorbed the institution of compadrazgo, adding compadres to the network of affinally and bilaterally-related kin. The procedures for adjusting conflict among members of the household and extended family networks reinforce the authority of the elders. When adjustive processes in the house and court "arrangements" and in curing ceremonies fail, the only recourse is for one of the disputants to leave the community or commit homicide.

Ceremonies within the household provide a model for the rules of the game that apply to adjustive behavior in the community. The household officials introduce new officials into their role, teaching them the prayers and directing the proceedings. Their authority depends upon age and prestige acquired in office. The me²iltatil, as the elders of the family, are the direct link with the ancestors. They and the nakawane provide the strongest force for preserving the ways of the ancestors.

CHANGE OF OFFICIALS

men whom the lay sisters assisting the priest have organized to help carry out the Mass and other church rituals. 794

Another pair of officials, the *kripinpaletik* or principales, were not mentioned in the category "officials in the townhall" or in that of "officials in the church," until I questioned, "Who names the officials?" The response was, "Principales with the president." In order to arrive at the higher honorific posts of principal, one must serve five times in the civil and six times in the religious posts in the traditional hierarchy. The principales provide continuity in the transfer of authority, remaining in the townhall when the old officials depart to their homes, and passing over the staffs to the new officials (App. 1, Q. 28, 31). It is a position without power in the day-to-day administration of affairs. Although the incumbents occupy prestigious positions and carry out ceremonial acts, many men avoid the office because of the loss of status in carrying out one of their most important acts, the collection of contributions for the major fiestas. The two principales must hold the plate into which the money is turned over by the police, and this causes "embarrassment." Formerly they were also bankers, holding the money until it was spent. This responsibility gave prestige to the act of receiving the money, now redefined as a sort of begging operation. 624
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A ceremonial link between the civil and religious wings is the group of officers known as the *alperesetik*, *alfereces*. They are associated with the four major saints, who are also represented by the *kobrarías* of Sacramento, Santa Lucia, San Pedro Martyr, and San Francisco. Their rank order is determined not by the importance of the saint but by the order of entry into office. These are named: *tai pasaro*, the past "father"; *ñil pasaro*, remains past; *slebal pasaro*, second past; and *2al* *alperes*, new *alferez*. They sit, move, and are served in this order wherever they appear. Although tied to a *2'ultas*, spirit father or saint, they function in the townhall in bearing the banners there from the church for civil affairs (App. 1, Q. 27), and they provide the post which is crucial for learning the set speeches useful in all formal occasions, called the *pa2'ot'an*, 'behind the heart.' Because of the crucial nature of this speechmaking, no man can progress into the post of first or second *regidor* without having passed through that of *alferez*. This post is the most difficult to fill because of the high outlay (3000 pesos in one year of average expenditures, about half the 794
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CHANGE OF OFFICIALS

average annual earnings of a man in this town); failure to accept the post when it is offered brings a jail sentence. On the following day, during a drinking session in the townhall with the assembled civil officials, the reluctant nominee usually accepts.

The civil career of an individual would be one in which he passed (*ik'as*, which I gloss as 'pass'; it is the same verb as Spanish *pasar*) first as police, then as third or fourth regidor. If he has passed as *alferez*, he will enter as first or second regidor at this stage, and then go on to second judge and finally become first judge. If not, he will stop as third or fourth regidor. After reaching the peak of his career as first judge, he may return to the police group as *martomero*. Present leaders of the town consider this an "ugly" custom and say they hope to change it because it puts men of major age in a position of minor importance. Formerly men had to fulfill six turns in civil office, twice as regidor and twice as judge, to be considered free of further obligation. But now, because of increasing population (according to informants), this has been lowered to five required turns. The post which has been eliminated is that of assistant judge, which is now filled by a representative of one of the two barrios.

Throughout his career in office, a household head is expected to alternate between the civil and religious posts. Religious posts are considered less onerous since they require only six months of service, from the fiesta of San Pedro and San Pablo at the end of June until January 6, and the men are on duty only Sundays and holidays. A balanced number of six turns in each of the branches of the hierarchy was expected, prior to the reduction of the number of civil posts to five, to bring one to the end of one's career. In a census of 311 household heads made in 1964, passage in office shows a balance between posts undertaken in each wing of the hierarchy. Of 13 men over 70 years of age, five had completed service in civil and religious office. Three who had passed as president had served only once or twice in each wing of the hierarchy. The remaining five had a balanced but incomplete career.

In the religious hierarchy, a man passes first as *mi'anil kuč ha?*, 'minor who brings liquor.' Then he will pass as *ali'bal*, the assistant to the *kobraría*, particularly charged with the slaughter of the bull for the large fiestas. These "servants" were not distinguished from other mayordomos in the initial listing of officers, but were mentioned in the description of fiesta

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